

Contact Information

Name: Hershel Jackson
Title: Deaf Services Advocate
Organization: Illinois/Iowa Center for Independent Living
Street Address: 3708-11th Street
City/State/Zip: Rock Island, IL 61201
Phone: (309) 793-0090 TTY/Voice
Email: hershel@iicil.com

Background

Our agency serves all people with disabilities including individuals with speech disabilities. As an advocate for people with disabilities; we're responsible for assisting individuals with speech disabilities in receiving information of the most up-to-date laws, services, and technology that has a direct affect on their lives to live independently and make independent choices. Individuals within the speech disability community experiences the same frustrations as individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafen, and deaf-blind when it comes to communicating and making independent phone calls through the Relay System.

Comments

As a deaf individual, I depend on the Relay program to communicate with my doctors, family and friends as well as contacting other area businesses to conduct business with them, so I share the same concern with individuals with speech impairments when it comes to relay service programs and how to make improvements to the relay program. People with disabilities, especially individuals in the deaf, hard of hearing, and speech disability communities, deserve to experience the the same independent choices as their non-disabled peers. By FCC providing support to continue Speech-to-Speech Relay program for individuals with speech impairments, it allows all individuals who depend on this service the ample freedom of making independent phone calls to family, friends, and community businesses without relying on another individual to speak for us. Also, FCC should strengthen it program on educating all communities in the disability and non-disability communities, on how to appropriately use the Relay program. It would benefit the program more greater if Relay Staff had yearly updated trainings to improve the quality of service they are providing to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafen, and with speech disabilities. There should also be tough penalties for individuals who misuse the relay system, as many callers are identifying themselves as deaf foreigners from foreign countries to conduct illegal scams that lead to serious crimes and causes problems for faithful users who rely on this system.

I hope the FCC will take my comments in serious consideration on continuing this program and how to improve it for the better, because it is people like me, as well as speech disability community, that depends on this service.